THE KALAHANDI QUESTION : SOME ANSWERS

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About the Author :

Shri Pradeep Kumar Jena I.A.S. started his career in Kalahandi District as an I.A.S. probationer during 1990-1991. During this period he was based at different block head quarters and availed the opportunity to make an indepth study of the problems and prospects of the region. During August 1991 to November 1992 he was the Sub-collector in Dharamgarh subdivision. Later on he worked for the Rehabilitation and Resettlement plan of Upper Indiravati Project for seven months and then joined as the Project Director of D.R.D.A. Kalahandi in May 1993. From April 1996 to September 1998 he was the Collector and District Magistrate of Kalahandi. At present he is Director Special Projects & Additional Secretary to Government of Orissa and based at Bhubaneswar.

This highly a claimed article was written by him during 1996-97 based on his first hand experience of seven years work in Kalahandi and had been presented in several seminars and workshops. We hope this article will help the readers to get an unbiased and objective image of Kalahandi and it will help the planners and policy makers to formulate appropriate development plans for the region.

Finally we would like to express our gratitude to Mr. Pradeep Jena for giving us permission to reprint this article as a monograph and also to publish it's Oriya version.

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Pradeep Jena, I.A.S.
Collector & District Magistrate
Kalahandi

Drought, starvation death, child selling, migration for no work.... the sheer utterance of these words echo back in the minds of the conscious lot of "We, the people.." a single penetrating word..... Kalahandi.... Kalahandi..... Kalahandi. Those who have not felt Kalahandi physically and have listened or read some descriptions, possess a deadly idea about this land by generalising some samples. Some have a fear which may be compared to the mythical fear of 'Kokua'. Oscillations at different stand points give birth to a number of questions which need an intensive analysis. Is Kalahandi realy convulsed with all these drear factors or it's real entity is in camouflage by vested interests ? Is the resource – population matrix of Kalahandi actually disheartening enough for the sustenance of Kalahandians or it is an inimitable way of selling the picturesque poverty in the generous national and international forum ?

PROBLEM :

The inquisitiveness about Kalahandi presents an identity crisis to the resources, prospects and more over the resourceful persons of this great land. Where lies the problem ? Where are the roots ? Why there is so much depiction of the resource crunch ? Why Kalahandi is understood as a word synonym to poverty, starvation... Does the problem lie with the soil... with the historical developments.... With the agricultural pattern... with the forest / water / mining resources..... with the infrastructure.... with the policies and programmes.... With the implementation machinery with the Govt..... or with the people.... with the levelled out panorama by a few drought – starved merchants ?

It is not possible within the limited space of the paper to analyse the problems of each and every sector and put up a comprehensive note. However an attempt has been made to depict the SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis of the district which itself though not exhaustive will give a glimpse of the problem possibility matrix.

S

1. High percapita land availability to the tune of 0.7 acres.
2. Forest coverage of 52.89% actual canopy being around 35%.
3. Rich resource of MFP
4. Abundant mineral resources of Bauxite, Graphite, quartz, Gem stone.
5. Availability of man power.
6. Lucrative Indravati Project
7. Black cotton soil good for cotton and banana production.
8. Good Climate for dry-land horticulture.
9. Vast stretch of nurseries in all the 13 blocks.
10. Long history of farm mechanisation.
11. Shortest road link of vizag-Bhawanipana - Raipur.
12. Railway linkange and New line to Junagarh and beyond in progress.

W

1. Undeveloped Human Resources.
2. Lack of adequate communication facilities.
3. Traditional & primitive agricultural practice & Low productivity.
4. Lack of health - infrastructure.
5. Retention of traditional social strategy and other social evils.
6. Low propensity foe education and awareness.
7. Lack of adequate electrification. (out of 2213 revenue village, 1258 have been electrified by 1994-95).
8. Large percentage of agricultural labourers. (to the tune of 70%)
9. Octopus like hands of the petty unscrupulous money-lenders.
10. Lack of self-confidence and dependency - syndrome.
11. Large number of widows.

13. Trained hand in watershed management.
14. Rich cultural heritage.
15. Developed handicraft and handloom sector.
16. Existence of 10,000 lt. per day milk chilling plant.
17. Sugar factory at Junagarh.
18. Spinning mill at Kesinga and Food processing unit at Biswanathpur in progress.

O

1. Agro. and agro-based industries.
2. Scope for horticulture.
3. Handloom and hadicrafts sector.
4. Scope for increased irrigation
5. Scope of fishery, livestock and animal husbandry development.
6. Scope of rural industrialization and strategic establishment of growth centres.
7. Scope of development of banking & co-operative practices.
8. Tourism including eco-religious-educational tourism.
9. Capture fishery I Indravati reservoir and in MIPs.

T

1. Erratic and sporadic rainfall.
2. Continuous deforestation.
3. Shifting from 'multiple cropping' to 'monoculture',
4. Lowering of ground water table.
5. Degradation of arable lands.
6. Continuous depletion of common property resources.
7. Burgeoning 'dependency-syndrome' of the people on governmental aids.
8. Influx of a large number of NGO's lacking true spirit.

AGRICULTURE–THE MAINSTAY IN MIST :

"The real strength of USA is not in the store of missiles but is in her vast productive corn fields". *"Anna chinta chamatkara"*. The quest for food excels everything. Where there is self-sufficiency / self-reliance of this most basic need, there only opens the door for the fulfillment of security, social – esteem and self-actualisation needs. Is Kalahandi incapable enough to feed her inhabitants ? Is the agricultural production low enough to force the Kalahandians to be in unfed or half-fed state ? Is the soil of Kalahandi infertile to the extreme, to accommodate any cropping pattern ?

As per the FCI report, around 1/4th of the total foodgrain collection of the state of Orissa is from Kalahandi. The district has got 3.93 lakh hectares of cultivable area of which high-land, medium-land and low-land constitutes 2.13 lakh, 1.01 lakh and 0.71 lakh hectares, respectively. Paddy is cultivated in about 1.83 lakh hectares of which 50 thousand hectares in high land, 66 thousand hectares in medium land and 67 thousand hectares in low land. More than 70% people depend on agriculture and besides paddy, pulses, oil seeds and vegetables are grown in different parts of the district. The varieties of scented rice like *Yubraj, Kala Krushna, Maha Laxmi, Baigana Manji,* are unique to this land.

The conventional agricultural practices here, are linked mostly with rain water. Till recently, only 12% of the land are irrigated from all sources. The productivity of paddy is about 14 to 15 quintals per hectare, where as the same of pulses is 4.5 to 5 quintals and of oil seeds 5 quintals per hectare. This is very less in comparison to the national average. (However, the inherent productive capacity of local scented rice variety is very low in comparison to other varieties, as quality and quantity are always inversely related). The causes of low productivity are primitive agricultural practices, poor seed quality, low fertilizer and chemical consumption, unscientific

management of soil & water, lack of diversification of production, lack of integrated pest management and the poor draught power of animals leading to poor tillage. The farmers do not put more labour force in doing trans-cultural operations. The uncertainty of monsoon acts as barrier for the farmers to take the risk of more investments. Hence, "poverty & uncertainty – poor investment in agricultural pursuit – poor output – poverty," becomes a vicious circle within which the farmer drags his life's cart on his own shoulders.

At the backdrop of our fertile land quality specifically the gifted black soil suitable for cotton and sugar cane, we are on the way to achieve self –reliance in the field of agriculture, provided the research – findings and multi-pronged strategy for agriculture are adopted properly.

Requirements :

* Massive diversification programme from paddy to non-paddy by substituting most of the high lands in the production of pulses, oil seeds and minor cereals.
* Withstanding the monsoon fluctuations, short duration paddy varieties be used in place of longer duration ones.
* Popularising production of pulses and oil seeds and cash crops like cotton & sugarcane.
* Encouraging adoption dry-land farming techniques, various soil and water conservation measures, increases the accessibility of farmers to the inputs like improved HYV seeds, fertilizers, chemicals and implements.
* Maximize the irrigation potential which includes the completion of Indravati project, renovation of partly / completely derelict MIPs, construction of new MIPs, renovation of existing traditional sources, like '*Kata*' '*Munda*' and "*Bandha*", construction of lift irrigation points and dug – wells in large numbers.

* Diverting the service – stricken educated youth to the agricultural / farming sector with extension facilities for technical orientation about different farming practices etc. by Agricultural Universities & Krishi Vigyan Kendras and the like.

* Adoption of improved delivery system and provision storage.

ON-GROUND REALITIES :-

It's not that, the potentiality of the district is in darkness and is not yet discovered. Two years back the district has topped in the state in the production of high-land paddy seeds. The district-level exhibitions present some astonishing quality of vegetables. This is the first district in the state to adopt farm mechanisation. Four years back banana was not as all a crop here. now from almost zero level, it has covered an area of 200 acres in Narla, Kesinga, Bhawanipatna, Thuamaul Rampur and Jaipatna areas. Sisal and Sabai grass has a hope for poor farmers in the marginal and degraded government waste lands. Cultivation of hybrid vegetables seeds, fertilizers and chemicals shows an exponential growth. The production of onion, groundnut and off-season vegetables and fruit crop such as Mango, Lemon, Orange, Guava, Banana, Cashew are awaiting better marketing strategy. In last few years, the horticulture sector has developed considerably. In another two years, the district through its nurseries and progeny orchards numbering 18 spreading over different blocks, would not only be self-sufficient in production of quality planting materials, but also to some extent will meet the requirements of the state. The Ber plantation on one side of Tel river over 30 Kms. is not a small achievement. Several private mango orchards and horticultural plantations is the watershed areas are showing increasing trend.

Lack of adequate marketing opportunity and non-availability of timely credit stand as major hindrances to the growth of cotton cultivation, which

is highly cash intensive crop. The spinning mill at Kesinga which was started with much fanfare and hope, is now in doldrums. The market interventions by the Cotton Corporation of India, SPINFED and COT FED have not been substantial to meet our need. So the call of the time is to take necessary steps either through Government or Private initiatives to make the wheels of spinning mill run which will enhance the economic status of the district 3,500 hectares are now under sugar-cane production, though the capacity utilisation of Western India Sugar Ltd., Junagarh demands a coverage of 8,000 hectares. Initially for some management crisis the tampo was not in grip but the potentiality is beyond any question.

INDRAVATI - THE LAST HOPE :-

The people of the district are just waiting for the miracle to happen. The dream project, often termed as the "Life line of Kalahandi," the Upper Indravati Irrigation Project (UIP), once completed would irrigate about 1,30,000 ha. of agricultural land in the drought affected region of the country. The project, another engineering marvel, is a multiple reservoir formed by 4 dams over four rivers namely Indravati, Podagada, Kapur and Muran, all belonging to Godavari River system. Water of these dams form a combined reservoir of 110 square kilometer and is to be diverted to Mahanadi river system at Mangalpur barrage over Hati river through a tunnel of about 4 Kms. and penstock of about a kilometer and tail race channel of 9 Km. In the process, it will generate 600 MWs of hydell-power at Mukhiguda. This project was originally conceived by the then ruler of Kalahandi state with the help of local engineering graduate Dr. Bhubaneswar Behera in 1945. However, the project started with its foundation stone laying ceremony on 1st April, 1978 with aid from the World Bank. The tunnel tragedy of 1991 killing 17 people and damaging the tunnel, the penstock and the power house followed by stringent R & R conditions and other conditionalities by the funding agency dealyed the completion

of the project. And even after 19 years it is no where near end. The farmers have been disillusioned. Many of them had perhaps thought that they would never see the project functioning till 29th September 1996, when the Government released water from the reservoir through a diversion channel specifically constructed for the purpose. In this drought year (1996-97) UIP gave irrigation to about 30,000 ha., saving the district from a great agricultural disaster of the century.

The project cost was originally fixed at Rs.208.14 crores. In 1992 the cost estimate became Rs.920 crore. The 1995 estimate puts the figure at Rs. 1116 crore of which Rs.630 crore have already been spent. Balance amount of Rs. 486 crore is still required to complete the dams, power house and other ancillary infrastructure for power generation. Necessary financial arrangement has been made in the mean while. The Power Finance Corporation has agreed to give Rs. 320 crore and the balance will be contributed by the State Government and Orissa Hydro Power Corporation (OPHC). With this arrangement, it is expected that the first Unit of energy component of the Project will be commissioned by the end of 1998.

As regards the irrigation component of the project, originally it was proposed to provide irrigation to an area of 1,09,300 hectares which is contemplated to be revised to 1,28,000 hectares. The revised Cultivable Command area (C.C.A.) of left, right and lift canal system stands at 59,300, 42,452 hectares, respectively.

So far, 52 km of left canal and 79 km of right canal have been completed. Further, the work of 1,000 km of baranch canal, minors and subminors are under progress. To make more water available to people by reducing leakage and evaporation loss, the project has envisaged concrete lining of main and branch canals at many places. The project also aims at participatory irrigation management by forming Farmers Operation and Turn-over (FOT) and Water user groups in the command area. The Lift

Canal system which has been conceived in the original proposal has not yet come up. However it is very essential as it would cover parts of Jaipatna and Koksara block which are hither to out of the U.I.P. system and don't have any other source of irrigation.

The people of the area are demanding early launching of the lift canal besides extension of canal system beyond Tel river to irrigate parts of Golamunda block and beyond Sagada river to cover parts of Bhawanipatna and Kesinga block. The engineers of the project feel that the water availability in the reservoir justifies such extensions without which the irrigation potentiality of the project can't be harnessed fully. The Government should make sincere endeavour in this regard as it caters to the need of this district, where successive Governments are blamed for the hunger, poverty, starvation deaths, sale of child and utter backwardness.

However, within the present resource constraints the project has made a big headway. It irrigated 30,000 hactares in the Kharif 1996 and plans to irrigate about 50,000 hactares in the *khariff* 1997 and another additional 30.000ha. in *Kharif* 1998. *Rabi* irrigation will probably start from 1998. Farmers have become ecstatic seeing the water irrigating their cultivated lands. One Sugar Factory, the only industry in the district has been set up with Indravati irrigation in mind. This year alone 6 major rice mills have come up and another 7 are in the pipe line. The number of rice mills are expected to be more than 50 by 2,000 AD from 22 till 1995. Hybrid paddy cultivation has made in roads in Dharamgarh area. Application of plant micro nutrients, bio-fertilisers, mechanized farming practices have been started in the command area. With completion of the project, the area will witness a sea change in agricultural activities. Without the project the total irrigation coverage was only 12%. With this also the district contributes around 40,000 M.T. of rice to the Food Corporation of India at present. With full commissioning, it will add 33% of irrigation alone

and thus, is expected to surpass what Bargarh area in Hirakud ayacut has achieved so far.

The present irrigation system in the district contributes to 12% of the net cultivated area. The district has got only one medium Irrigation project namely Uttei Irrigation Project, basically a diversion weir over Uttei river at M. Rampur. Besides there are about 150 MIPs out of which nearly 54 are completely derelict and 9 are partly derelict, Government has set up 365 Lift irrigation projects out of which 290 work. Besides, private individuals have setup 122 Lift irrigation points. There are more than 650 water harvesting structures and about 100 mini diversion weirs besides few thousands of traditional water sources such as *katas, mundas and bandhas* and about 14,000 dugwells. At present the district gets irrigation from the following sources.

	No. of sources	Area in Ha.
Medium irrigation	1	9306
Minor irrigation	150	21704
Lift irrigation		
(a) Govt.	365	3288
(b) Private	122	561
Dugwells	13770	5508
Other sources (WHS, Diversion weirs, katas, mundas)		20000
TOTAL		60367

The district has got potential for some more medium irrigation projects like Ret-Uttei and many MIPs and diversion weirs. Besides, the river networks of this district can have at least another 300 to 400 lift irrigation points very comfortably. An informal study shows that another 20,000 to 1,30,000ha can be added to the irrigation ayacut if these projects are taken up. Thus,

with completion of Upper Indravati Project and these works, the district will be irrigation about 2.00 lakh hectares which will account for more than 50% of the net cultivated area. The indigenous people of the district have developed several mini-structures by damming some streams and rivulets in the upper hill - tracts and diverting the said water to green some times up to 50 acres of barren hill slopes and valleys. The structures created in Malijuang area of Lanjigarh by Sri Karji Majhi and Leling padar area of Thuamul Rampur by late Meru Majhi are no way less than modern engineering structures.

Thus, in few years from now, we can have at least two crops in over 1.5 lakh hectares besides two crops in residual moisture in many other areas.

Introduction of water efficient irrigation systems like sprinkler and drip systems, promotion of irrigation through deep borewells and provision of low cost water lifting devices like low lift hand pumps and leg pumps, popularisation of shallow tubewells in the paleo river channels and propagation of diesel and electrical pumpsets have now assumed priority in the agenda of the administration. This coupled with formation of Water User's Associations and transferring the irrigation resources to these associations for operation and maintenance and participatory irrigation management through Farmers Operation and Turn-over (FOT) groups would not only reduce loss of water unnecessarily but will enhance the quality of equitable distribution of water resulting in increased area of irrigation besides providing trouble free maintenance of irrigation work.

THE DWINDLING FOREST AND THE DWINDLING FORTUNE :

".... the hill sides leading upto the valleys and plateau lands of the hill tracts are densely covered with valuable forest. The tree most commonly met with the state is the *Sargi* or *Sal* and attains to very large dimensions; trees of over 8 feet in girth being not uncommonly found. " These are

quoted from the report of Lt. C. Elliot, Deputy commissioner of Raipur who visited Kalahandi in 1856. Now the actual canopy cover is less than 33%. The age-old shifting cultivation or *Jhuming* has been lessened but has not ceased. Men, fire, animals, insects, fungus, climbers, weeds and climate are some of the harmful factors for the large scale denudation and degradation of forests. Still the situation is better than that in other parts of the state.

A large section of the tribal folk depend mostly on forest for their livelihood. The minor forest products of the area are kenduleaf, bamboo, kusmi, lac, broom grass, mahua flowers and seeds, siali bark, sunali bark, sabai grass, and sal seeds and the benefit of collection directly goes to the local tribals by providing them and engagement for more than 4 months.

The marketing of Minor Forest Produce (MFP) lies with Tribal Development Cooperative Corporation (TDCC) and two private firms. The tribal folk who are unaware about the market price of the products and still practice the primitive modes of weighing usually do not get appropriate price. Sometimes there is deliberate delay for the purchase so as to pull down the price. The TDCC also utilizes middlemen in some cases who exploit the situation to their content. Can't a group of tribals or their associations be allowed or be issued with required licence to deal with MFP directly is a big question. The district administration has taken a bold step recently by dictating higher prices keeping in view the economic upliftement of tribals. The rate of Rs. 4 per kg. of broom stick has been raised to Rs. 10, a 250% increase. But are the tribals of the remote areas aware of this ? Have TDCC and other lease holding organizations taken steps to communicate the tribals properly about this historic revision of price ? Have the agents served a catalytic role in providing right information, by leaving their personal interests which is closely connected with the ignorance of the tribals ? Is it not the right time to give an way to healthy competition by nourishing the tribal groups to do their own job ?

Bamboo :

Kalahandi is one of the largest bamboo producing areas. Bamboo as a raw material is mainly used in the paper industry. Orissa Forest Development Corporation (OFDC) has taken the permit from forest department and has engaged one paper industry as their raw material procurer. Bamboo cutting is a seasonal operation where about 10,000 families get employment for a period of 5 to 6 months in a year, but the wage rate is substantially low. A person gets only Rs. 2.56 for cutting and bundling of 10 pieces of bamboo of 8 ft. long each. The bamboo-cutter should be treated at par with semi-skilled labourer. The recent agreement of increased rate of Rs. 3 per bundle is an welcome step. However, a lot more is required to be given to the workers considering the risk and hazards attached to the job.

Kenduleaf :

The district produces more than twenty six crores kerries (one kerry = 3 bundles of 20 leaves each) of Kenduleaf. The area of operation is all the blocks except Th. Rampur. The rate paid by the Corporation to the pluckers was Rs. 0.35 per Kerry and is now enhanced to Rs. 0.36 per Kerry. The area under Kenduleaf is gradually reducing. Now about 30,000 hectares are under Kendu plants. The potentiality, though pretty high in the district to act as a major revenue earner, is not being harnessed because of the lack of investment in the maintenance and up – keep of Kendu plants. This is an income-source in the leanest period i.e., April and May to the poor farmers, more particularly, to women. Hence, it needs special attention.

Plantation :

Substitution of forest, through plantation and afforestation measures, is taken with care in this district. Nourishing a plant is more difficult

than nourshing a child. Kalahandi has the valuable nurseries at different corners. Plantation to the tune of 5,000 to 6,000ha. is made every year. The Regeneration of Degraded Forest (RDF) in watershed areas has yielded good results. Public consciousness and participation through "*Bana Sangrakshana Samities*" (Forest protection Committee) are marked with a perceptible change, but still much more is required. The people-at-large should feel the environment as their own; then only any effort by Government or Non-Government bodies will be fruitful.

INDUSTRIALIZATION–KALAHANDI'S BIG LEAP :-

Kalahandi is industrially backward. Barring a few rice mills and few small scale industries, there is no industrialisation worth the name.

In 1993 the first major industry was stared in Junagarh area – "The Western India Sugar & Chemicals Limited" to process 1250 TPD of sugarcane with a further promise to increase the capacity to 2500 TPD and ancillary chemical industries. However, lack of commitment on the part of the management has disappointed the farmers and sugarcane areas have not grown significantly.

The second major investment – the spinning mill at Kesinga with ultra modern facility got started to fulfill the aspirations of the vast majority of cotton growers of the place. But as ill luck would have it the farmers could not see the project operated. The hopes of hundreds of youth for eventual employment could not materialise.

A food processing industry in private sector started coming up at Biswanathpur. But unfortunately again the project could not be completed in last five years. The Famous guavas of Sinapali, Boden and Dharamgarh areas, oranges of Lanjigarh and Mohangiri areas, mangoes and jackfruits of vast stretches in Kalahandi and near by Rayagada district, pine-apples of Thuamul Rampur and Chatikona areas, tomatoes and papayas in vast

hinter lands spreading over 4 backward districts, and bers of Kesinga, Karlamunda and Golamunda blocks could not be processed and thus, not only demoralised the farmers but checked propagation of further plantations in the district. The district has got tremendous scope for agro – based industries. It has also got equally good promise for industrialisation in mineral sector, for the district is very rich in mineral resources like bauxite, graphite, granite, quartzite and gemstones.

The bauxite deposits of Karlapat, Baphilimali, Sijimali and Kuturumali and that of Niyamgiri hill range form part of the major deposits of the Eastern ghat bauxite. The bauxite reserve of 281 million tonnes can very easily feed about 5 to 10 Alumina Complexes. The district holds a good promise for granite polishing industry as black and pink granite are abundantly available. Gemstones processing industry has also a good future. Rubies and saphires of Jilingdar, Hinjili Bahli and Keromuda, cat's eye of Sirja pali, iolite of Hatimunda and Odobahali, Garnet of Ghatpada and Budha para can be mined and processed in the district. The GEMCO has only started a beneficiation unit to separate the gemstone from the mother rock – mass at Jilingdar. This industry can be a major employment – provider in the mining sector as well as processing sector (lepidiary units). What is needed most now, is a full –fledged geophysical survey (a major part is already done with UNDP assistance) followed by massive prospecting efforts by the Government.

The district's vast stretch of forests, yield a lot of minor forest products which are procured and then disposed of out side. Some sincere effort for processing of the forest produce like tari, turmeric, honey, lac, leafplates, hill brooms, amla and medicinal herbs and sabai are required. Manufacture of bamboo plys has big potential in the district. It can as another major source of employment.

Each and every Kalahandian has got the potentiality of being a productive factor from industrial stand point i.e. from the point of view of the unique Handloom and Handicraft and Cottage industry sector. In the handloom sector, around 1,500 weaver families of the district mostly engage themselves in weaving cotton and silk sarees, dhotis, lungis and dress materials in Sambalpuri, Bomkai and Khandua pattern. But few weaver families of Chicheiguda with the ideas and technical guidance of the master weaver Sri Ugrasen Meher, have kept alive the Habaspuri pattern which was in a state of extinction. This unique design, once started in a tiny village of Habaspur (hence the name Habaspuri) is distinctly from Sambalpuri, Nuapatna, Bamkai designs and embodies geometrical tribal motifs in its borders and pallu. Besides, they have started modernising the sector with the introduction of different colour ranges and by mixing-up different pattern of the state with their traditional design. Now they have diversified the production into utility sector like bed-spreads, door and window curtains, fancy-dress materials, table clothes and napkins, etc. In addition, weaving in palli vastra and silk is now catching up with rural traditional and non-traditional weavers too.

The ancient stone carvings of the famous Belkhandi temple, the ancient rock painting of Gudahandi, excavated terracotta materials from Asurgada, Maraguda valley and Thuamul Rampur areas point to a rich heritage in handicraft sector. Now in the district the finest art form in terracotta, horn works and appliqués are not seen. However, the wood craft developed in Khairpadar village of Dharmgarh has got state and national acclaim. The stone works of Ambapani and fine craft works of paddy in Kesinga area have been highly appreciated outside. Of late, with DRDA's effort and with the technical support of the Government tribal wood carving, wooden utility articles and cane and bomboo works have been started. Master craftmen brought from outside have trained the artisans who now have gone for commercial production in these trades. A visit to Artisan's

Industrial Multipurpose Co-operative society (AIMCS), Narla would speak the progress in this field. The Tripura pattern bamboo works are now undertaken with the support of Government of India at Junagarh. Utility products such as wall-hangings, idols, table wares, chairs, tables and cots are being produced out of bamboo in the district by the local folk. Besides, agarbati making, broom making, candle making, and leaf – plate making have made some progress.

HELP US-WE ARE DYING :-

Are all of the people poor ? Are all of them under the pangs of dire economic sustenance ?

The per capital land availability in the district is 0.7 acres 31 percent of the landed class own 69 percent of the net cultivated area. Our per capita paddy in normal years is 2.137 quintals and minor crops 0.36 quintals (1993-94). We contribute food grains to the central pool to the tune of about 40,000 M.Ts. Still there are clamours that we are drooping with abject poverty.

More than 47,0000 people are getting old age and widow pension. About 3,000 people are getting disability pension. 1,48,000 children are covered in Mid-day meal programme in the primary schools. More than 1,44,000 of 0-6 years age group of children and pregnant and lactating mothers are covered under ICDS feeding.

More than 22,000 people, mostly old and in firm not covered in any of the above schemes, are being provided one cooked meal a day under emergency feeding. All these beneficiaries are out of a population of about 12 lakhs. Every third person is covered under some or the other social security schemes.

Every year about 5,000 families are covered under income – generating activities under IRDP, MADA, ITDA and SC/ST corporation. 500 youths

are trained every year in some trade and provided **with loan facilities** for self – employment. About 500 women are formed into groups under DWACRA Scheme which provides about Rs. 25,000 relevolving fund along with provision for training and loan to raise their income level. About 2,500 families are given Indira Awas Houses while a similar number get a free dug well under million-well scheme. Besides, the DRDA and ITDA generate a lot of employment schemes like JRY, EAS, DPAP, IWDP, etc. The various line departments in the district execute different sectoral programmes for the improvement of quality of life. More than 1,650 primary schools, about 300 high schools and 30 colleges have given berth to nearly 2,00,000 students. 36 child labour schools attempt rehabilitation of about 1,800 children, 1,156 Anganwadi Centres spread over district have devoted themselves to child and mother care. More than 1500 traditional birth attendants have been trained with improved delivery practices for safe birth. PHCs and additional PHCs in block and different GP's, ANM centers, Life stock Aid centers are in the job in the health sector. District Leprosy Society and District Blindness Control Society have also contributed their might. More than 6,500 tube wells are providing safe drinking water all over the district. Over and above, more than 500 NGOs are in the field extending selfless voluntary services to improve the quality of life of the poor and down-trodden. Inspite of all these there is clamour every where, that poverty is mounting.

Then what is the outcome of Government efforts, all the incentives, all the investments in different sectors and the sincere services of the NGOs ? Is every thing a nullity ? If it is so, who is responsible ? Is the Government to be blamed solely ? Don't the people have any responsibility ? What are the conscious elite group and peoples' representatives doing to improve the situation ? Is it not the time for self-analysis ? From the experience of last 3 decades, do not we feel that the district is developing ? Can't we mark the change in the infrastructure,

consumption pattern, socio economic growth, increase in GDP, development in banking, Insurance, transport, communication, agriculture, horticulture and above all, education ?

Certainly there is positive development though the rate of such change is relatively slow.

THE "FOLK-LORE" OF STARVATION :-

"Ghar nein, Dih nein, Bada nein, Kam nein, Dhanda nein, Po nein, Jhi nein, Khai bake nein, Gulgula hauchhe, Marijuche agyan" (In the dialect of Kalahandi)

[No house, no home-stead land, no agricultural land, no work, no vocation, no son, no daughter, no food to eat, in a miserable state, I am dying, Sir]

The emotion attached to such expression by a rural folk, indicates not only the lack of self-confidence of an un-handicapped being, but also his wishful easy living and dependency syndrome. It is not inherited, rather thrust upon.

A peculiarity is that the message of starvation spreads like wild fire after one's death. The bond fraternity and fellow-feeling suddenly comes to life after one's demise. Can the Collector sitting at the district head quarters or the Chief Minister sitting at the state headquarters, the Prime Minister at the National headquarters, the see with the only pair of gifted eyes all these in the remote corner of the land facing the dire pangs of starvation ? When the neighbour fails to notice the deplorable condition, when the co-villagers are unaware that some one of them is dying for a morsel of food and when the functionaries at the grass – root level are in darkness about the pitiable condition of somebody within the easy range of their reach, how can the reflection of such plight be seen before a chair, standing miles away ? Can anybody get justice for any injustice

done to him without knocking the doors of justice ? Can silence reflect the sense of self-esteem and the underneath words be understood without any communication ? The source of knocking at right doors and with right spirit may not be one's own but atleast somebody should knock. We may be individuals, simultaneously, we are the parts of a whole.

STARVATION DEATH : SOME FACTS

INCIDENT NO : 1

Eight young persons put forth a grievance of a village folk who was alleged to have expired two days back, after continuous starvation for 8 days. A simple question was asked to them, "On humanitarian grounds have you visited him while he was starving ? Have you managed to give him half a meal even once ?" The answer came, "No". "Why have you come ?" A budget of around Rs. 8 lakhs was presented pertaining to employment generation and infrastructure building. "You spend around Rs. 400 for coming here. One or two of you could have come. Rest money could have been given to that poor man for whom you are pleading. "There was no answer.

INCIDENT : 2

"There was a hue and cry about a starvation death of a person who had a pair of workable bullocks, 8 acres and 12 decimals of owned land, one quintal of paddy in store and a son working at Rourkela whose link was not cut-off from his father."

INCIDENT : 3

"He had taken food in the night. He had also taken tea in the morning. We were out for bathing. When we returned he was no more He was in tensely thinking of my marriage. That only engulfed him." said the daughter. The wife showed some prescriptions but could not say what was his illness. "Have you ate anything on the day before your husband's

departure ?" She gave an expression of assent. Can a woman of rural India take food herself, by keeping her husband unfed ? But some people say, it is a starvation death. The beliefs of the people about starvation here, is juxtaposed with their harmful simplicity which nurtures a favourable condition for the trading of poverty. A death magnified as starvation death is more valuable than a heap of gem stones. The propensity of earning "easy money" with "starvation" as the "hot cake" will go on accumulating so long as the business is profitable. No business man wishes to shut down the doors when the margin of safety is lucrative.

CONCLUSION : A HOPE FOR SELF ACTUALISATION

The resource – population and problem-possibility matrices definitely put us in confusion. The idea of poverty a midst plenty", automatically comes to mind. Some allege "Kalahandi" as a black dot in the human globe, but is it backed by substantial proof ? "There are now two kinds of drought the real and rigged. Both can be underway at the same time at the same place Water resources experts and administrators would largely agree that, barring problems of erratic timing and spread, most Indian districts could get around 800 mm of rainfall annually. The lowest rainfall Kalahandi has had in the past 20 years is 978 mm. Besides, Kalahandi produces more food per person than both Orissa and India as a whole do" reports P. Sainath. One of the Herculean problems the Kalahandi farmers face, is the multi-faced crab-holes (locally known as 'Bholu') which give way to water-oozing and hampers the crop. The problem of Kalahandi seems so; the valuable resources and the adequate grants percolate in some unwanted but dominating pass ways. Money alone will not solve the problem, rather mount it up.

"Here we are face-to-face not only with the question of equity but also the vital issue concerning the dignity of common man and quality of national life. Denigration of physical labour and related skills has been

one of the most important reasons for the decline of Indian civilization. It is at the root of cultural decadence and atrophy. We hold that physical labour is an essential condition for cultured and fulfiiling human life", views B.D. Sharma, an exponent in the sphere of backward area development. As Nehru explained," We all know better implements, better ploughs, better seeds, more irrigation, more fertilizers, more manure etc. Everybody know, what has to be done and where it has been done. Yet when you spell it out, the problem, becomes big, for there are 60 million farming families in India. It is not a question of lack of resources; you have to train up 60 million families & prepare them mentally to do the job as they should. That is the problem "(India problems, in the third plan : A critical miscellany P. 47). In the view of Gunar Myrdal, "attitudinal changes of the people" is the foremost requirement. Hence, we need an appropriate HRD strategy. Traditionally, Kalahandi had two classes – the rich and the poor. The development of this age-old oppressed class is not an easy task. The commitment of bureaucracy, of political personel and public representatives, of NGOs, formation of pressure groups, transparency in administration, better literacy-cum-awareness, specifically of women, information with the people and last but not the least, taking power to the grass – root i.e. to the village level not terminating at the Gram Panchayat level are highly required for a perspective change. The people at grass-root need a soft touch so that matching enthusiasm will be generated. Sincere efforts by all concerned will convert the "SUKHBASIs" in to "real SUKHA BASIs". Development is not a one-man business. In sheer ignorance of self identity, the loud appeal of manufactured self-esteem is not the gate-way of salvation. The nature made us born-rich. We should not overlook our possessions and be in the whirl pool of dependency. We should be firm and upright and say without shrinking – within that we are Kalahandians, the 15,000 years great culture bearing Kalahandians. The days may come a bit late but are not far.

APPENDIX-I

SOME BASIC DATA OF KALAHANDI ON RAINFALL AND CROPPING PATTERN.

ANNUAL RAINFALL IN KALAHANDI DISTRICT AND ORISSA (IN MM)

Year	Kalahandi	Orissa	Year	Kalahandi	Orissa
1977	1354	1327	1989	1073	1284
1978	1360	1333	1990	2214	1866
1979	1069	951	1991	1570	1466
1980	1354	1322	1992	1490	1344
1981	1148	1480	1993	1554	1422
1982	1117	1492	1994	2045	1700
1983	1118	1660	1995	1580	1588
1984	1396	1018	1996	1945	908
1985	1755	1607	1997	1624	-
1986	1362	1548	1998	1125	-
1987	1049	1040	1999	1210	-
1988	978	1357	2000	1164	-

CROP PATTERN IN KALAHANDI (2000 KHARIF) *

1.	Paddy area	183000 hect.
2.	Non-Paddy Area	210500 hect.
	Total Cultivable Land	**393500 hect**

NON PADDY CROPS (In Hectares)

1.	Pulses	81254
2.	Oil seeds	20168
3.	Vegetables	17334
4.	Fibres	16891
5.	Spices	1826
6.	Sugarcane	2670
7.	Other Crops / Fallow	70357

* *(Source : District Administration, Kalahandi)*

(Note : Kalahandi region has still one of the best diversified cropping pattern with practice of Dry Land Agriculture and cultivation of Drought Resistant Crop Varieties. Still some people, because of ignorance, blame the farmers for growing paddy crops in large area. Paddy cropped area in Kalahandi is already less than 46.5% of the total cropped area).

About Sahabhagi Vikash Abhiyan :

Sahabhagi Vikash Abhiyan (S.V.A) is a collective of several Community Based Organisations and individuals dedicated to fighting poverty and injustice and to work for a more human world through the process of sustainable development efforts. Sahabhagi Vikash Abhiyan works in collaboration with local Community Groups, like minded Voluntary Organisations working at regional and international level, Concerned Individuals as well as Government and Non Govemment organisations to achieve greater impact towards attaining it's objectives.

Sahabhagi Vikash Abhiyan promotes the development activities through action research, educational activities and provide support services to social workers and voluntary organisations in Orissa.

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